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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""

Wasn't it a national newscaster that used to conclude each newscast with
"that was the week that was"? Yep, it's been another one of those weeks.
Early retirement is looking more tempting than ever!

Earlier this week, I actually had a moment to let my mind wander a little
bit. I had been doing some clearing out of some clutter, and realized how
much Atari stuff that I had around my study. As I was looking at each item,
I would be reminded how and when it came into my possession. And that led
to my remembering how I got involved with Atari computing in the first
place.

It was some time in 1987. I was working on the beginnings of what I was
hoping to become a mystery novel. I was putting down ideas on paper, and
then dragging out an ancient Royal typewriter that my mother had given me
when I went off to college. It was a pain. At around that time, my sister-
in-law's (at the time, my wife's sister was not married) husband were
frequent visitors. We shared interest in gaming (at the time, my big
interest was still the 2600. He had a few Atari 8-bit machines, and I
managed to borrow one of them to play a few games.

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Dis6502 1.9 Released

This is a major release and perhaps the last for a bit, including
segment and byte modification as well as a small assembler:

http://sourceforge.net/project/showfiles.php?group_id=145747

New features:

- Bytes in the dump window can be edited.
- A small assembler is included in the dump window.
- A log window displays log and error messages. No more message box.
- Segment properties (start address and type) can be modified.
- Added an option to split a segment
- Added an option to remove bad segments (generated by xmodem padding).

- Ability to generate relative labels for an address range
- New dialog box to customize default path for all kind of files.
- Output format is now saved in INI file
- The address of a label is displayed as a comment when selecting a
  line in the disassembly window.

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                          PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                        compiled by Joe Mirando
                           joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. We have UseNet! My provider seems to have
gotten their issues under control and now I've got plenty of stuff to
include.

You know, in the old days, writing a column was a little different than
it is today. If you were lucky enough to have a typewriter, you still
had to deal with typos and correction fluid (if you typed like I do),
and revisions meant re-typing at least an entire page. It was really
horrible to watch someone like myself compose miscellaneous bits of
information and turn them into something resembling coherent thought.

Along came IBM's selectric typewriters (yeah, the ones with the type
balls). They could justify text and, when you switched type balls, it
could print in different fonts. To justify print, you would type your
line on one side of the paper, adjust some dials and make some quick
calculations, and they retype the line on the other side of the page.
This resulted in two columns on the page, one justified, one not. Then
you had to cut the justified copy out and paste it on to your galley
(the template for the news paper or magazine). It was more work, but it
resulted in nice justified copy. Most editors thought it was worth the
trouble. Of course, THEY didn't have to do the typing.

I can remember the first time I saw a "composing machine". It was a
Merganthaler Line-O-Comp, and it printed text onto photosensitive paper
which was wrapped around a rotating drum. You would type your story,
news item or column in a line at a time and at the end of each line the
machine would flash it to the paper. It was more than twice the work,
but it had some pretty revolutionary features. It could print in
different fonts and different sizes, and it could justify the lines for
you.

These days, all you need is a computer and word processor or text
editor. Add a printer/scanner/copier and you've got your own little
print shop. And as a bonus, it no longer takes twice as long...
Unless the content for your piece happens to be tied up in the limbo of
a malfunctioning network run by an overgrown conglomerate.

And so we find ourselves with much more freedom as long as the folks "up
the line" have things well worked out. Freedom AND reliance.

Interesting concept, no?

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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'CutterJohn' asks about sense error codes:

"I'm not having much luck tracking down this error code, but
a hard drive in an ICD FA-ST drive enclosure is returning:
error: sense $04

Does anyone have any ideas what this is?
(ICD utils report it as an Adaptec 5500. I haven't had a chance to
crack open the drive case and check out the mechanism yet though...)"

Steve Adam tells CutterJohn:

"I found a list of sense codes. These were in the
documentation for some SCSI Tape drive access
code called TapeBIOS by a guy named Alan Hourihane.

His code was for accessing Tape devices, but
most sense codes should generally mean the same
thing on different devices.

Sense Key (0-7) Descriptions

 ==
 Sense Key   Description
 ---------   --
 0H   NO SENSE. Indicates that there is no specific Sense
   Key information to be reported. This would be the
   case for a successful command or a command checked
   because of Filemark, EOM or ILI bits being set to
   one.

 1H   RECOVERED ERROR. Indicates that the last command
   completed successfully with some recovery action
   performed by the target.

 2H   NOT READY. Indicates that the Tape Drive addressed
   cannot be accessed. Operator intervention may be
   required to correct this condition.

 3H   MEDIUM ERROR. Indicates that the target detected a
   non-recovered error condition which was probably
   caused by a flaw in the medium or an error in the
   recorded data.

 4H   HARDWARE ERROR. Indicates that the target detected
   a non-recoverable hardware failure (for example,
   controller failure, device failure, parity error,
   etc.) while performing the commandor during a self

test.

   5H   ILLEGAL REQUEST. Indicates that there was an Illegal
       parameter in the Command Descriptor Block or in the
       additional parameters supplied as data for some
       commands (Set Mode, etc.).

   6H   UNIT ATTENTION. Indicates that the Tape Drive may have
       been taken off line or the TAPE CONTROLLER reset (by
       BUS DEVICE RESET message or "Hard" Reset Condition or
       by CLEAR DRIVE command) since the last command was
       issued to the Logical Unit. This Sense Key is reported
       the first time that any command is issued after the
       condition is detected and the requested command is not
       performed. The UNIT ATTENTION Sense Key is reported to
       all Initiators which subsequently issue a command to
       the TAPE CONTROLLER. This Sense Key is cleared for the
       next command from the same initiator.

   7H   DATA PROTECT. Indicates that a command which writes to
       the tape was prevented by the absence of a write enable
       ring. The write operation is not performed.

   8H   BLANK CHECK. Indicates that a read operation timed out
       without finding data.

   9H   VENDOR UNIQUE. Provided by SCSI to report vendor unique
       conditions.

   AH   COPY ABORTED. Generally not used.

   BH   ABORTED COMMAND. Indicates that the target aborted the
       command. The initiator may be able to recover by trying
       the command again.

   CH   EQUAL. not used.

   DH   VOLUME OVERFLOW. Indicates that the tape drive has
       reached the End of Tape and data remains in the buffer
       which has not been written to the tape. A Recover
       Buffered Data command may be issued to read the
       unwritten data from the buffer. (set only when PEOT
       is set in MODE SELECT command)

   EH   MISCOMPARE. not used.

   FH   This Sense Key is RESERVED. "

CutterJohn thanks Steve:

"Thanks for the response. I was afraid that, that was one of the more
serious error codes, still I'll have to open up the enclosure and check
out the connections. The other drive seems to be running well for now
though, although looking at the partition names from the "dead" drive
I'll probably miss some of that stuff...

(Now to find some high-density D connector to the generic 50 pin
converter as, unfortunately all of my unused SCSI drives have
those(high density)...

grr... and/or are SCSI-2/3 or ultra... sigh... and of course my
other(pretty new) external enclosure only has the old(!!) 50 pin
connector as well...)...

It's semi-official, I'm an idiot. I was just looking at the ICD Driver
control panel and just NOW noticed: hey! a sense codes button, well let
me click. Guess what pops up? A window entitled common sense codes,
$04 drive not ready!

(I guess I was sort of thrown since the manual(yes I actually got a
copy) says about sense codes(paraphrased): good luck. each controller
defines those not 0 or 127 as whatever they feel like, please don't
bother us, find them on your own...)

(...and another thing is for sure. The next thing that I need to do for
any of my systems that don't have hard drives is to acquire controllers
and drives for them some how...)"

Ronald Hall asks for help with Aniplayer on his CT60:

"Okay, I've got my CT60'ed Falcon back together and running again.

But...(why does there always have to be a "but"?)...I can't seem to get
Aniplayer working right.

I grabbed v2.22 from Didiers' web site, extracted it, ran the setup app,
it picked C for everything so I just let it have its way. It stuck a
couple of programs in the AUTO folder and some other stuff in the root
of C. I copied the English stuff over so I could read it, etc, etc,...

Tried to play an OGG. Pallette on the desktop background lose most of
its color and the mouse pointer freezes. Everything freezes, requiring
a hard powerdown (manual switch off) and rebooting. Its much faster
going through the fsck check with my CT60 but thats not really why I
got it. :-)

Same with an MPEG.
Ditto with an AVI.
Ditto with a MOV.

Can anyone point me to a install guide or perhaps tell me what I'm doing
wrong? I ran Aniplayer with my old Nemesis Falcon years ago and I never
had any trouble. Very solid program, so I'm assuming its me."

Didier M^'quignon tells Ronald:

"Check your SDMA clock or your F030 system clock."

Ronald tells Didier:

"I'm a complete newbie when it comes to the CT60 'n stuff. I've no
idea how to do what you just said. If you could please tell me how?

BTW, I went back, turned sound off, and it plays the movies fine. Its
something thats going on whenever sound is accessed/used. I don't know
if that helps point in the right direction or not."

Greg Goodwin asks Ronald:

"Do you have something modifying your sound matrix? Poke around with
the sound .CPX (I can't recall if that is actually it's name) and see
what you come up with."

Ronald tells Greg:

"Thanks, I'll try that. As soon as I find that CPX. I don't have any CPX
that has anything to do with sound in the CPX folder currently.

Hmm. Do you mean the one with the picture of the head that turns right
and left to reflect balance?"

Greg replies:

"No, I'm referring to the one that modifies the sound matrix. (I can't
seem to recall its name off the top of my head.)"

Ron tells Greg:

"Okay thanks. I'll have to look around and try to find it.

I've had some partial success. Without doing anything but changing the
68020 file for the 68060 one, I can play MP3s, with about 10% usage
according to Aniplayer. The sound is clean and sharp. Here is the ugly
part - if I try to play .OGGs though, the usage goes to 460% or higher
and it continuously replays part of the song every couple of seconds
before moving on.

This now applies to movies as well - usage goes to 700% or higher, and
the movie video/sound replays itself, skips, etc,...

Since I can play MP3s, with low usage, and very clean sound, does that
mean I still probably have a problem with the SDMA clock, or perhaps I
just don't have Aniplayer (or something else CT60 related) set right?

I still can't play PMDOOM with sound either. Rocks, very playable with
the "-audio off" switch in use though."

'Peter' jumps in and tells Ronald:

"Dude, there must be something fishy with your system.
The only trouble I've had with Aniplayer is some slight hickups in
Xaaes, but nothing that hangs the computer.."

'Paolo' adds:

"Well, Mpeg and OGG... maybe you need to check for the correct location
of the SLB files. By the way, I can't get OGG work with the 030
library, I need to use the 68000 one."

'ReTrOGeek' asks about his 1040's video flicker:

"I just got a 1040 that when loading from disk the screen flickers,
flips for 1 second on every track read. Other than that everything else
seems to be working ok. Any ideas? It seems after it warms up the
flicker goes away!"

Ronald Hall tells the Geek to try the tried and true
Atari-Table-Top-Drop fix:

"Umm, I made a feeble attempt to answer this at Atari Age, but basically
what I said was try the time-honored tradition of raising it a couple of
inches in the air and dropping it on a hard surface. If it works, then
you'll eventually need to open it up and reseat all the socketed chips.

If it doesn't work, my best bet (and first guess actually) would be that
your power supply is weak and you need a new one."

Geek tells Ronald:

"I tried another 1040 PS and it does the same thing! I took it apart
and reset all chips. No luck... Oh well off to find another MB!"

Jo Even Skarstein tells Geek:

"Your PSU is dying. The flickering is caused by a drop in voltage
every time the floppy-drive move it's head."

Christian Keck adds:

"I had the same problem with my brand-new 10040 in 1987. If it is caused
by poor regulation of the power supply, it might be fixed by additional
electrolytic capacitor between the +12V and GND lines. Another cause
might be larger voltage drops caused by high currents flowing through
the GND line. This might be fixed by providing a better, lower-resistance
connection between PSU and disk drive GND pins."

Now ReTrOGeek asks an interesting question about giving a STacy a color
LCD screen:

"I was wondering, has anyone ever attempted to upgrade a Stacy to a
color screen? With all the mods and hacks being done this could be a
cool hack. Any ideas?"

'Peter' tells Geek:

"Hey, that's a cool idea.

A TFT with the right size, and a RGB/Composite/TV -> VGA adapter + some
wires internally. You could even make it support all 3 resolutions if
you're lucky. I don't have a Stacy so I can't try it myself,
unfortunately.."

Pawel Kaznowski adds:

"I I thought about that too. It could be possible but the problem is to
get right TFT and cheap one.

So then it should be possible since STACY got full ST VIDEO compatible
SHIFTER. But then I think it should have better POWER SUPPLY or more,
better batteries."

Lyndon Amsdon adds his thoughts:

"Check out Lilliput, they might make a screen big enough, I know they do
little 8" screens that take in VGA and composite."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time,
same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - EA Unveils Xbox 360 Games!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Trojan Targets Consoles!
                                    Superman Returns!
                                    And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
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                Electronic Arts Unveils Games for Xbox 360 Launch

Electronic Arts Inc. on Monday announced five video game titles that will
be available for Microsoft Corp's Xbox 360 console when it launches next
month.

EA, the world's biggest video game publisher, will debut the Xbox 360
games, "Need for Speed Most Wanted," "FIFA 06: Road to FIFA World Cup,"
"NBA Live 06," "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06" and "Madden NFL 06," at
Microsoft's X05 event in Amsterdam on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Additional EA titles under development for the Xbox 360 include, "The
Godfather," "Battlefield 2: Modern Combat" and a new game from the "Burnout
Revenge" franchise.

Release dates for the three additional Xbox 360 titles have not been announced.

Microsoft has set a November 22 release date for its next-generation console. Analysts expect the software giant and No. 2 gaming console maker to ship around 2 million Xbox 360s this year.

Microsoft Reveals Game Lineup for Xbox 360 Launch

Microsoft Corp. on Tuesday unveiled a partial roster of video games for the launch of its new Xbox 360 game console next month.

Microsoft confirmed that exclusive Xbox 360 titles available for the holiday season will include the action-adventure game "Kameo: Elements of Power" and the much-anticipated shooting game "Perfect Dark Zero," both from Microsoft-owned Rare.

"Project Gotham Racing 3" from independent game studio Blizzard Creations also should be available in time for Christmas, Microsoft said at a press event in Amsterdam.

Electronic Arts Inc., the world's biggest video game publisher, earlier this month said it will have five titles ready for the Xbox 360 launch. Those titles are "Need for Speed Most Wanted," "FIFA 06: Road to FIFA World Cup," "NBA Live 06," "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06" and "Madden NFL 06."

Microsoft said it will announce more launch titles in the coming weeks.

The Xbox 360, Microsoft's next-generation gaming machine, will be released in the United States and Canada on November 22. The standard version of the console will sell for $300, while a package with extras, including a hard drive that lets users play some games for the original Xbox, will be $400.

Analysts, who expect Microsoft to ship about 2 million Xbox 360s this year, have been closely watching the lineup of games for the console because cutting-edge games help drive console sales by the hard-core gamers who are first to buy new machines.

Microsoft, the second-largest maker of video game consoles, expects 15 to 20 games on the market for the Xbox 360 launch. Just over a half dozen games were available when the original Xbox hit the market in 2001.

The company said its 2006 Xbox 360 game lineup will include "Crackdown" from Real Time Worlds, whose team includes developers involved in the creation of the blockbuster "Grand Theft Auto" franchise. Other expected 2006 titles include Epic Games Inc.'s "Gears of War," Silicon Knights' "Too Human" and "Mass Effect" from BioWare Corp.

Fuller List of Xbox 360 Launch Games Emerges

Video game publishers this week revealed most of the lineup of titles slated for release when the Xbox 360 game console ships to stores next month - news many expected from Microsoft Corp.

The world's biggest software company and second-largest video game console maker behind Sony Corp. has said it expects 15 to 20 games on the market for the North American debut of its next-generation game player on November 22.

Game enthusiasts and analysts expected Microsoft to make the full list of games available this week at its annual European press event. Instead it promised to reveal the full roster in coming weeks.

Meanwhile, video game companies have announced their own plans.

Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. is shooting to have five games ready for the Xbox 360 debut, a spokesman said.

Take-Two, best known for its controversial but wildly successful "Grand Theft Auto" franchise, said its launch titles are basketball game "NBA 2K6," hockey game "NHL 2K6," tennis game "Top Spin 2," snowboarding game "Amped 3" and "The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion," a role-playing game.

Activision Inc. has four Xbox 360 launch titles on its list. They are World War II game "Call of Duty 2," action game "Quake 4," extreme sports title "Tony Hawk's American Wasteland" and the western-themed "GUN."

Electronic Arts Inc., the world's biggest video game publisher, on Monday said it will have five titles out in time for the launch. They are the racing game "Need for Speed Most Wanted," its "FIFA 06: Road to FIFA World Cup" soccer title, basketball game "NBA Live 06," golf game "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06" and "Madden NFL 06," the latest installment of its popular football game.

Microsoft this week did confirm that the action-adventure game "Kameo: Elements of Power" and the much-anticipated shooting game "Perfect Dark Zero," both from company-owned developer Rare, will be shipping at launch.

"Project Gotham Racing 3" from independent game studio Bizarre Creations also should be available, Microsoft said.

Analysts, who expect Microsoft to ship about 2 million Xbox 360s this year, have been closely watching the lineup of games for the console because cutting-edge titles help drive sales to the hard-core gamers, who are first to purchase new gadgets.

Electronic Arts 'Returns' Superman to Video Game

The Man of Steel will soon be the man of pixels.

Electronic Arts, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment and DC Comics confirmed Tuesday that a game tied to Warner Bros. Pictures' film "Superman Returns" will be released in conjunction with the movie's June 30 premiere.

"Superman Returns: The Videogame" will draw from the upcoming film and from the character's six decades as a comic book star, said Gerhard Florin, EA executive vp and general manager for International Publishing. It is being developed by EA's Tiburon studio in Orlando, which is the same team responsible for EA's popular "Madden NFL."

The game will come out on Microsoft's next-generation Xbox 360 platform as

well as current consoles, said Jason Hall, senior VP at Warner Bros.
Interactive Entertainment.

There have been video games based on Superman in the past, including titles
from Atari and Titus Software Corp., but they were not well received.

California Bars Violent Video Game Sales to Minors

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger ignored strong lobbying from software
makers and signed legislation on Friday that bans the sale of violent video
games to children.

Passed by the California legislature last month, the measure follows heated
national debate after game publisher Take-Two Interactive Software Inc.
pulled its best-selling game "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" from retailers
this summer because of hidden sex scenes.

"I am a parent myself and I think this is extremely important that we know
what our kids watch or what kind of games that they play," Schwarzenegger
told reporters.

"I am a big believer in those video games. I mean they're terrific, a lot
of them are manufactured in California and they're doing a great job," he
said at a signing ceremony.

"We just want to make sure it doesn't go into the wrong hands or children
under the age of 10 start playing those things because it does have an
impact on our children."

The star of many violent movies during his acting days, Republican
Schwarzenegger had not previously indicated his position on the issue.
Democratic Assemblyman Leland Yee, the bill's author, said he was surprised
the governor signed his bill.

The measure bars the sale and rental to minors of games that show serious
injury that is determined to be especially heinous, atrocious or cruel.
Violators are subject to a $1,000 fine.

Several other states, including Illinois and Michigan, have similar laws,
prompting legal fights with the $10 billion video game industry. Courts
have ruled against bans in Washington state as well as Indianapolis and
St. Louis County in Missouri.

The California law says exposing youths to video violence could result in
psychological harm.

"Exposing minors to depictions of violence in video games, including
sexual and heinous violence, makes those minors more likely to experience
feelings of aggression, to experience a reduction of activity in the
frontal lobes of the brain, and to exhibit violent antisocial or aggressive
behavior," it said.

Symantec Identifies Trojan Targeting Gaming Devices

Security software experts identified a malicious program targeting Sony
Playstation Portable systems that marks the first so-called Trojan found in
video game devices, Symantec Corp. said on Thursday.

The world's biggest security software maker said the Trojan represented a
low-level threat, only affecting machines users have modified with their
own code. A Trojan is a destructive program that masquerades as a harmless
application.

"It does not affect the average user," said Eric Chien, a principle
software engineer at Symantec. "This is the first time we have seen a
Trojan on a gaming device."

He explained the Trojan says it is a file named "EXPLOIT 2G PSP Team
V1.RAR" that allows users to run their own code on the Sony devices, but in
fact destroys the machine.

Symantec researchers identified the Trojan when monitoring online
chat-rooms used by the gaming community. Chien said the discovery is
evidence hackers are expanding their targets.

"It goes to show malicious code writers aren't just targeting personal
computers and aren't just trying to get some replicating code to infect
the machines," Chien said "Anything that can run code is potentially being
targeted."

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->A-ONE Gaming Online   -   Online Users Growl & Purr!
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            'Pong' Officially Nominated for a Chance to Receive a
              Star on San Francisco's 'Walk of Game' at Metreon

Atari, Inc. announced PONG has officially been nominated for a chance to
receive a commemorative star on the Walk of Game. Located at Metreon, Walk
of Game is the first-of-its-kind landmark dedicated to honoring the icons
and pioneers of the interactive entertainment industry. Walk of Game
inaugural winners include Nolan Bushnell, Shigeru Miyamoto, Halo, Link (The
Legend of Zelda), Mario, and Sonic the Hedgehog.

Throughout the month of October, gamers worldwide are encouraged to cast
their votes once a day for PONG at http://www.WalkofGame.com. These votes
will determine the next set of inductees to receive a permanent 24" x 24",
customized steel star on "The Walk" that will forever memorialize their
impact on videogame culture. Voting opened at 12:01 a.m. PT on October 1,
2005 and will close at 11:59 p.m. PT on October 31, 2005. The final 2006
inductees will be announced in November 2005.

Originally released in 1972, PONG, the first commercially successful video
game, was an adaptation of table tennis to the video screen and is widely
regarded as ushering in the video game era.

The 2006 Walk of Game Nominees include:

Games/Characters

Castlevania, Civilization, Donkey Kong, Doom, Double Dragon, EverQuest, Final Fantasy, Fox McCloud (Star Fox), Frogger, Grand Theft Auto, Half-Life, Lara Croft (Tomb Raider), Madden NFL, Myst, Pac-Man, Pitfall Harry, PONG, Quake, Resident Evil, Samus Aran (Metroid), Space Invaders, StarCraft, Street Fighter II, Tetris and The Sims

Lifetime Achievement

John Carmack (Doom), Peter Molyneux (Populous, Fable), Sid Meier (Civilization, Pirates!), Toru Iwatani (Pac-Man), Will Wright (Sim Series)

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

States Hope to Begin Taxing Online Sales

A coalition of 18 states representing about 20 percent of the nation's population has forged an agreement to begin collecting sales taxes on Internet purchases.

The group hopes to convince retailers - but does not force them - to begin collecting taxes and turning it over to state governments.

The agreement puts in place a procedure for businesses to collect sales taxes from Internet and catalog purchases, and puts in place an amnesty that protects them from being pursued for taxes not paid in the past.

After negotiations, which lasted for three years, the states including Iowa had agreed to definitions of taxable items and procedures for paying the taxes.

The deal is designed to provide a uniform system for retailers who routinely sell across state lines. In exchange for collecting and sending tax revenue to the state, retailers would be compensated for the costs of collecting the taxes, and protected against liability for accounting mistakes.

"The implementation of the streamlined agreement will allow states to recoup valuable resources that can, in turn, be put toward education, public safety, tax relief, or other pressing state needs," said Illinois State Sen. Steve Rauschenberger, President of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The boom in electronic sales through the Internet and burgeoning catalog sales could generate billions of dollars a year in tax revenue for states. The NCSL estimates states lose as much as $8.9 billion a year from sales

taxes that aren't collected on the electronic transactions.

Filling that gap has proven to be problematic, and it's far from certain how much will be collected from the agreement which went on the books over the weekend. The measure puts in place the procedures for businesses to remit sales taxes but doesn't require the payment, and many large retailers have said they have no intention of paying.

Fiscal conservatives in particular face conflicts on the issue, because they are generally opposed to any tax increases and many view broadening the sales tax as a tax hike.

They face conflicting pressure, however, from main street businesses, another core constituency. Those business owners argue that it isn't fair to force them to pay sales taxes when online retailers they compete with don't pay the taxes.

The agreement does not change state tax rates, and it leaves individual states the decision on what items are taxed.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1967 and again in 1992 that states do not have the authority to require a retailer to collect sales taxes for a state where the retailer doesn't have a physical presence.

The court did leave the door open to Congress to grant the authority to the states to make those collections, but Congress hasn't done so.

The creation of uniform standards and rules is a way the states can send a signal to Congress they are ready to begin collecting the taxes if given the authority.

The 18 states signed on to the agreement are Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota and West Virginia. Also Arkansas, Ohio, Tennessee, Utah and Wyoming. Nevada will become a member in January.

Gmail Gets Upgrades

Google on Friday continued tweaking its Web-based e-mail program, adding several new features to the popular Gmail.

Among the improvements are auto-save, contact exporting capability and new access and search features.

Users who keep their contacts in Gmail now have a quick way to export that information for use in desktop or other programs.

In the contacts page, an export button was added, giving the option for Outlook CSV (Comma Separated Value) format or Gmail CSV for exporting to new Gmail accounts.

The Mountain View, Calif.-based search giant also added three ways to keep users coming back to their Gmail accounts.

First, the company added one-click access to Gmail via the Google Toolbar, which puts search and other tools directly inside the browser.

The company said it also added the ability to view messages from a
personalized Google homepage, which users can alter to view news and other
information.

Additionally, messages can now be searched via Google Desktop.

Regardless if the user is online, e-mails in the Gmail account are included
alongside the search of desktop e-mail, computer files and documents,
music, photos and chats.

Lastly, auto-save recovers e-mails written but lost due to browser or
computer crashes.

The additions, which were posted on the About Gmail page of Google.com, are
the most recent to Gmail, which is still in beta.

Search-Engine Rankings Unchanged In August

Google Inc. remained the search-engine leader in August, accounting for
close to 1 in 4 searches on the Web, a Web metrics firm said Monday.

Google increased its share by 1.2 percent, rising to 37.3 percent from 36.1
percent in the same month a year ago, according to ComScore Networks. Among
the top five search engines, Microsoft Corp.'s MSN and Ask Jeeves, which is
owned by IAC/InterActiveCorp, also increased their market shares, rising to
15.8 percent from 14.4 percent, and 6 percent from 5.9 percent,
respectively.

No. 2 Yahoo Inc., dipped nearly 1 percent to 29.7 percent, and the Time
Warner Network fell 1 percent to 9.6 percent from 10.6 percent.

AOL Buys Weblogs to Boost Blog Presence

America Online Inc. will inherit Engadget, Autoblog and other popular Web
journals as part of a $25 million deal announced Thursday that expands
AOL's presence in the blogging community and the company's potential to
attract advertising dollars.

The 85 blogging sites that AOL is getting as part of its purchase of
Weblogs Inc. let users read about everything from travel to technology and
debate on topics like parenting and movies.

The move comes as AOL, facing drops in subscriptions as its traditional
dial-up business declines, focuses more on offering free content to attract
a larger audience and create more advertising space.

AOL, a division of Time Warner Inc., is paying $25 million in an all-cash
transaction, said an executive familiar with the deal. The executive spoke
on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to disclose
financial details.

Although Santa Monica, Calif.-based Weblogs will operate with full
editorial control and independence as a wholly owned subsidiary, AOL will
integrate the blogs into its AOL.com portal by linking to the best entries.

Visitors to AOL's Moviefone, for instance, might see referrals to Weblogs' Cinematical blog on films.

Jim Bankoff, AOL's executive vice president for programming and products, said the company will work with the Weblogs team to create additional journals that fit with AOL's existing lineup of programming channels and new ones that emerge.

Until now, AOL's blog presence has been largely limited to giving visitors free tools to create their own blogs.

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 9 percent of Internet users have created blogs and 25 percent have read them. The audience is relatively small, but readers tend to be influential, whether in politics, technology or some other sector.

The appeal of blogs, which can range from one teenager's ranting about school to an industry insider's take on the latest gadgets and trends, comes from their unfettered, conversational nature, though those qualities can also give larger companies headaches. Some Weblogs blogs, for instance, contain occasional profanity.

Weblogs' blogs, which include Joystiq on gaming, Blogging Baby on parenting and Gadling on travel, appear to have accomplished what other blogs only dream of: They make money.

Jason McCabe Calacanis, co-founder and chief executive of Weblogs, has said that Weblogs gets more than $1 million a year by participating in a Google Inc. program in which text ads are triggered by keywords on a Web page. But the company generates even more revenues from other advertising, Calacanis said, refusing to provide details.

Calacanis said advertising has sold out on 12 of his blogs through the end of the year, and the referrals from AOL's portal will expand the inventory.

"What every advertiser says to us is, 'Please get us more traffic. We want to spend more money,'" Calacanis said. "That was one of the major factors" in the decision to find a buyer.

The blogs will keep their look and feel along with their domain names. Still undecided is whether they will carry a tag identifying them as part of AOL.

The agreement with Weblogs, signed Wednesday, is expected to close next week. Dulles, Va.-based AOL will now sign agreements with the more than 100 independent, freelance bloggers who produce more than 1,000 postings weekly on Weblogs' blogs.

California Passes Nation's First Antiphishing Law

On Friday last week, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the Anti-Phishing Act of 2005 into law. The first-of-its-kind bill makes Internet phishing a punishable offense. The new law will permit victims to seek recovery of actual damages or up to $500,000 for each violation, whichever is greater.

Under the Anti-Phishing Act, introduced by state Senator Kevin Murray, any

attempt "to solicit, request or take any action to induce another person" to divulge personal information on the Internet via "a Web page, electronic mail message or any other electronic means" while representing oneself as a business without the permission or authority of that business is a civil violation.

The new law seeks to protect personal information, such as bank-account numbers, driver's license records and Social Security numbers. It also covers automated and electronic signatures, account passwords, unique biometric data and "any other piece of information that can be used to access an individual's financial accounts or to obtain goods or services."

Unfortunately, Internet security analysts say it is unlikely that the law will have any real effect on the rate at which phishers are committing crimes. "Sadly, this law will likely have the same effect as Can-Spam Act had - that is, very little," said Jonathan Penn, a principle analyst at Forrester Research.

The problem with the law, according to Penn, is how the legislation defines the crime. Phishers or identity thieves have found ways to perpetrate their crimes without using e-mail or Web sites.

The increasingly clever criminals are using other means to snare their prey, such as malware attacks like pharming, which targets a computer's core components to seamlessly redirect consumers to malicious sites instead of their actual banking or financial sites.

Penn suggested that if phishing is defined as fraudulent e-mail intended to get people to supply their pertinent information, "then it is only looking at some of the attacks" and not at the whole range of criminal activity.

In the past, law enforcement officials have not had a winning record for catching and prosecuting phishers, primarily because these criminals are able to obscure their identities by piggybacking their attacks through robot networks and other similar means.

Penn recommends that instead of going after the actual perpetrators, which are difficult to catch, legislatures should target the middlemen and benefactors of identity theft. "A far more effective avenue of pursuit would be the vast network of criminals that trade in stolen identity information," he said.

Rufus Connell, an industry research manager at Frost & Sullivan, believes the new phishing law is an interesting step forward. But he also believes it will do little to deter phishing spam and similar attacks because many of these attacks originate outside California and even outside the U.S.

"These attacks are usually global in nature, and therefore a hacker in Estonia or China can conduct identity theft via phishing with little regard to laws in California," Connell said.

California is known as one of the most progressive jurisdictions for new security legislation, with previous laws, such as the California Breach of Information Act, having a cascade affect on state legislatures across the country. It is likely, then, that other states will follow suit and implement their own antiphishing legislation.

AOL Boosts Anti-Phishing Protection

America Online, the online division of Time Warner Inc., on Wednesday said it plans to step up protections against the illegal gathering of subscribers' sensitive data through fraudulent Web sites.

AOL said it has struck partnerships with MarkMonitor Inc. and Cyveillance and expanded an agreement with Cyota Inc. to help prevent what's popularly known as "phishing."

The companies will help AOL spot and block sites that mimic legitimate companies. AOL also plans to monitor for new phishing sites across the Web as well as track down suspicious links contributed by its subscribers.

"The only difference between a phisher and a mugger is that a phisher uses a keyboard and not a gun," Tatiana Platt, AOL Chief Trust Officer, said in a statement.

The move follow improvements AOL made in late September to block out programs that track user behavior, known as "spyware."

Trojan Horse Sneaks Through MS Office Hole

Microsoft says it is investigating a recently released Trojan horse that targets a hole - first identified in April - in its Microsoft Office software suite.

Symantec has issued an advisory that the Trojan horse, named Backdoor.Hesive, can arrive as a Microsoft Access file, exploiting a Microsoft Jet Database Engine buffer overflow. The code can give an unauthorized user access, Symantec says, allowing an intruder to upload files, modify Registry values, and get system and network information.

A Microsoft spokeswoman wrote in an e-mail response Monday that the company is encouraging users to be cautious when opening.mdb files from an unknown source. A patch has not been released yet, according to the company.

The Trojan is not widely distributed and can be easily removed, Symantec says. The company rated its damage potential as "medium."

The flaw in Microsoft Office was first identified in April by HexView, a computer security firm. The vulnerability is caused by a memory-handling error when parsing database files, HexView reported.

The Trojan can be triggered after a user opens an affected.mdb file in Microsoft Access, according to an advisory issued by Secunia, a security firm, in April.

Government Cracks Down on Spyware Operation

Government regulators are trying to shut down a company they say secretly downloaded spyware onto the computers of unwitting Internet users,

rendering them helpless to a flood of pop-up ads, computer crashes and other annoyances.

The Federal Trade Commission accused Walter Rines of Stratham, N.H., and his company, Odysseus Marketing, of luring computer users with the promise of free software that would make peer-to-peer file sharing anonymous. The claim was bogus, the agency said, and the software was bundled with spyware that was secretly downloaded onto computers.

Spyware has been a growing problem, with calls in Congress for legislation and an increase in enforcement by federal regulators.

Spyware describes a broad category of software that can be installed through unsafe e-mails or Web pages, or can be bundled with software that consumers download to their computers.

Rines said he has done nothing wrong and that users were fully aware of what they were downloading.

"There was nothing secretly installed anywhere," he said. "In fact, the users had to click a box that said they read the end-user license agreement."

The FTC said the disclosure about spyware was buried on his Web site.

Odysseus allegedly used a spyware program called Clientman that spawned downloads of dozens of other programs - slowing computers down, bombarding them with pop-up ads and redirecting them to fake search engines that were rigged to show Rines' clients first, according to the FTC complaint.

The agency also said the spyware was nearly impossible to remove. Rines, the FTC said, offered his own "uninstall" tool, but it didn't work and actually installed additional software.

The commission accused Rines and his company of unfair and deceptive practices that violate federal law. It asked a federal judge in New Hampshire for a temporary restraining order, but planned to seek a permanent halt to Rines' operation.

The lawsuit is an encouraging step because it can be difficult to track down the distributors of spyware, said Ari Schwartz, associate director at the Center for Democracy and Technology, a privacy-advocacy group that researches and investigates spyware.

"It's a big deal," he said. "It shows the FTC can work its way backward down the chain."

The FTC filed its first federal anti-spyware case last fall against Sanford Wallace, a New Hampshire man known as the "Spam King." It accused him of using spyware programs to infect computers and then selling $30 remedies that the agency said didn't work.

Wallace and Rines were partners at one time, the commission said.

UK Hackers Jailed for Global Computer Worm Plot

Two British hackers were jailed on Friday for helping to spread a computer

worm which affected thousands of machines around the world including some at the U.S. Department of Defense.

Jordan Bradley, 22, and Andrew Harvey, 23, were part of an international hacking group called "TH34t Krew" which created the "TK worm," a so-called "Trojan" program that surfaced on the Internet sometime before February 2003.

Likened to the wooden Trojan Horse of Greek mythology which concealed enemy soldiers, "Trojans" are malicious computer programs that are disguised as harmless information and can make their way on to a computer over the Internet.

Officers from Britain's National Hi-Tech Crime Unit (NHTCU) estimated the TK worm caused millions of pounds worth of damage, infecting 18,000 computers around the world.

The program could also take control of computers it infected.

Newcastle Crown Court jailed electrician Harvey for six months and unemployed Bradley for three months.

The men, both from northern England, had admitted conspiring to "effect unauthorized modifications to the contents of computers with the intent to impair the operation of those computers."

British police said that in a separate trial held in the United States in June, 21-year-old Raymond Steigerwalt from Indiana was jailed for 21 months and ordered to pay the Department of Defense $12,000 in restitution for his role in the plot.

Detective Superintendent Mick Deats, deputy head of the NHTCU, said organized criminals were increasingly using such worms to commit crime over the Internet.

"Companies are taking the brunt of their attempts to steal money and data, but consumers are also being hit," he said.

"This year, 166 companies responding to our survey into the cost of hi-tech crime said they had lost over 70 million pounds to viruses, worms or Trojans."

Travel Industry Gets New Online Domain

A new online domain for the travel industry is open for business. Airlines, theme parks, restaurants, tourism offices and others in travel and tourism are eligible for Web sites and e-mail addresses ending in ".travel."

The new domain could give consumers confidence that they are dealing with a legitimate travel business or group, though the mantra of "buyer beware" applies: Operators of the domain won't be performing any credit or criminal background checks or offering any guarantees.

New York-based Tralliance Corp., a unit of Internet communications company Theglobe.com, won approval to run ".travel" earlier this year from the Internet's key oversight agency, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN.

Since July 1, industry groups such as the Adventure Travel Trade
Association and the International Hotel and Restaurant Association have
been verifying that companies and organizations belong to one of 18
eligible industry sectors.

Those approved were allowed to register and use ".travel" names starting
Monday.

Although Tralliance billed the domain as an online space for the global
travel and tourism community, travel journalist and author Edward Hasbrouck
criticized the rules, saying they exclude travelers at the expense of
promoting travel businesses.

"The domain appears to exclude the participation of the largest class of
people who use the Internet to travel - people who use the Internet to post
their travel stories and photos and all sorts of things," Hasbrouck said.

Cherian Mathai, Tralliance's chief operating officer, said individuals
might qualify as travel media if they offer a service, such as advice on
how to get there. Simply creating a site with family photos from Peru's
Machu Picchu won't qualify, he said.

Approval is made on a case-by-case basis, he said.

So far, many of the eligible travel sectors are in transportation,
including airlines, bus operators, cruise lines and passenger rail lines,
a group that covers suburban commuter lines but not city subway systems.
Also eligible are hotels, casinos, camp facilities, travel agents and
providers of travel technologies.

To prevent overlap with ".aero," an existing domain for the aviation
industry, airports and aerospace companies don't qualify - but airlines
do.

Mathai said the list will be continually reviewed by a nonprofit group of
travel associations, the Travel Partnership Corp., and may grow to include
retailers of luggage, for instance.

ICANN has been creating new Internet suffixes partly because existing ones
like ".com" are crowded, making easy-to-remember addresses difficult to
obtain. Nonetheless, Web sites that already have a ".com" name are likely
to keep it and automatically redirect visitors to the new ".travel" site
instead.

"Nobody wants to give up a dot-com name at this stage," Mathai said.

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